

Rhodes

The island of **Rhodes** is one of the biggest and also one of the most beautiful islands in the Aegean Sea.

It is the capital of a group of islands, which form the state of Greece named **Dodecanese**, (meaning the 12 islands together). It is located at the southern most part of the Aegean Sea and very close to the shores of Asia Minor; which in present days is called Turkey and it is actually the point where the three continents meet; Europe, Asia and Africa.

Covering an area of 1398 sq. klm and with a population of about 100.000 people, Rhodes is a country unto itself and even in the years before tourism it was easily self sufficient.

The capital of the island of Rhodes is **Rhodes Town**, located at the northern most peak of the island and it is a lovely town with a lot of charm and character, since it combines successfully the ancient the medieval and the modern.

The first thing that you will notice upon the arrival to the town, are the great walls that surround the magnificent castle that the **Knights of St. John** have built during the period of the crusaders. Immediately after you will be fascinated by the many natural marinas that embrace like a lace the town and the old harbor, as well as, by the bright colors that the **Rhodian sun** will bring out; and Sun, is something that Rhodes has plenty of. According to the statistics, Rhodes is the sunniest place in Greece and has more than **300 days of sunshine a year**. This is what forced the ancient Rhodians, to come up with the legend of the Sun God, according to which Rhodes was the domain of the sun god **Helios (1)** Rhodes is also the island of the roses (that's where it gets its name from), of the bougainvilleas and of the butterflies (there is a whole valley at the other side of the island). Rhodes has lots of natural water as well (rivers, springs, wells etc) so the combination of mild climate, sun and water, transforms this island into a blessing.

History

The island of Rhodes, due to its very strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea, has always been a stepping stone for many people and it always played a very important role in the history of the whole area. The Doreans were the first to inhabit this island as early as the first millennium BC and it is truly remarkable that until today the modern Rhodians still speak!!!... the Dorean dialect of the Greek language.

Rhodes is also the place where one of the **seven wonders (2)** of the ancient Greek and Roman world stood; which was, of course the **Colossus (3)**. Colossus was a huge bronze statue of the Sun-God (who else), dedicated to the freedom of the Rhodians, which stood at the entrance of the old harbor, welcoming the visitors that were arriving to the island from the sea.

Through the years, many have past through the island **(4)**, which officially became a part of modern Greece... mid 20th century.

Points of interest

A). **The medieval city**, which was built by the Knights of St. John during the period of the crusaders. Within the walls of the medieval city today, more than 6.000 people live and work in the very same buildings in which the knights lived, 6 centuries ago. It is a live monument and one of the very few in Europe; for this reason **1988, UNESCO** awarded this city and it is considered part of our **world's heritage**. Within the medieval city, the **Castello (Grand Master's Palace)**, **the knights Hospital** (which houses the archaeological museum), stand out. The Castello was partly destroyed by a huge explosion in 1856, but the Italians restored it at the time when they occupied the island, in order for it to be the summer home of their King Vitorio Emmanuel III and Mussolini (none of them ever came). The wonderful palace-museum, now houses some of the most exquisite mosaics of that time.

B). **The Mandraki**, which is a castle like, building that once housed the fish market (during the period that the Turks occupied the island) and in our days it is surrounded by beautiful coffee & pastry shops while on the inside it is filled with restaurants.

C). **The warm springs of Kallithea**, which was a natural spa area before World War II. There was a spring there with water that had therapeutic elements. People would go there, drink the water and very soon they had to visit one of its... rows and rows... of toilets. The spring dried out some 30-40 years ago, but still remaining are the wonderful buildings and facilities. There is also a very nice beach there, sandy, with shady pine trees and underwater activities (diving, snorkeling, etc)

D). Some 5klm away from a lovely little town called Theologos and on the street that leads you to a village called Psinthos, lies the **Valley of Butterflies**, which is a big park, in which a certain kind of butterfly goes to breed.

E). About 50 klm away from Rhodes town and somewhere in the middle of the east coast of the island, located is the unique town of **Lindos**. Lindos was one of the three first establishments on the island. It has a population of about 1000 people, which live in white washed houses, built in one mass like a wreath around the sacred rock of the Acropolis of Lindos, which is dedicated to the goddess Athena Lindia. Most of the houses in Lindos open up into spacious courtyards decorated with fine naturally multicolored pebbles, kind of a local art, in various forms and shapes (flowers, ships, dolphins, animals, mermaids etc)

Beaches

Rhodes is a paradise of beaches and almost all of them have golden fine sand of fine pebbles. The majority of them are organized with facilities (chairs, umbrellas, showers, WC, snack bar, sports etc). The most popular ones are... **Faliraki, Kallithea, Elli and Lindos**. The waters are perfect to swim in from late April up until November.

Shopping

Shopper's paradise!!! Currency is the euro and everything else that ... sounds like money. Look for ceramics, leather goods, jewelry, umbrellas and wine.

(1) SUN

According to the Greek mythology, when the ancient gods were dividing the Earth among themselves, the Sun-God Helios, was absent. He was on his trip around the world, on his chariot, when he returned and saw that no land was left for him, he made a piece of land rise from the bottom of the sea, that only he knew it existed because he could see it from above. So he asked the father of the gods, the mighty Zeus, to give him this piece of land, so he can make this his domain. Zeus agreed and that is how Rhodes became the domain of the sun god. This explains according to the ancient Rhodians why this island has so much sun. Also this island must have been underwater once, because still today, one can find seashells on the top of mountains!!! proving, in a way, that the island must have been under the water once.

(2) The seven wonders

The seven wonders of the ancient Greek and Roman world, were the biggest and most impressive of all manmade monuments. All of them were built around the area which we call today; **the cradle of civilization**.

Unfortunately there is only one still remaining and this is the Great Pyramid at Giza. The seven wonders are the following:

1. **The Hanging Gardens of Babylon** (the system of irrigation was the wonder)
2. **The Temple of Artemis in ancient Ephesus**
3. **The Statue of Zeus**, inside the temple of Zeus, in ancient Olympia
4. **The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus** (tomb of King Mausolus)
5. **The Pharos of Alexandria** (lighthouse)
6. **The Great Pyramid of Giza**
7. **The Colossus of Rhodes** (giant bronze statue of the sun god)

(3) Colossus

Colossus was a huge bronze statue, 27 meters high, representing the sun god; Helios. It stood on a base at the entrance of the ancient harbor and it was constructed the year 305 BC. The year 226 BC after a very strong earthquake, Colossus broke at the knees and fell. The Rhodians were advised by the oracle of Delphi not to move the fallen giant, from its new position. So Colossus, remained on the ground for centuries, it was actually a tourist attraction; people would come from all over to see the fallen giant. The Colossus remained on the ground until the year 653 AD, when Arabs captured the island, when they cut the Colossus in pieces; loaded him up on 900 camels; took him across to Syria and sold him as metal scrap. The sad end of a giant...

(4) The Chronology Of Rhodes

BC

- 4000 First human settlements on the island
- 2500 Settlement by the Minoans
- 1600 Rhodes Mycenaean Period; Settlement by the Achaeans, foundation of Ialysos, Kamiros and Lindos
- 1200 Trojan War
- 1100 Beginning of the Dorian migration. Made their capitals in the 5 cities
- 1000-700 Formation of the 6 city Dodecanese league. Hexapolis.
- 650 Rhodian colonies in Sicily, Italy, Spain and France.
- 490 First Persian war. Rhodes fights on the Persian side. Greek victory at Marathon
- 480 Second Persian war, Greek victory at the battle in Salamis.
- 478 Rhodes joins the Delian league.
- 408 Founding of the new capital, Rhodes city.
- 336 Alexander the Great occupies Kos. Rhodians join him against the Persians.
- 331 Founding of Alexandria, Egypt becomes an important trade centre.
- 323 Alexander's generals divide up the conquered areas leading to war.
Rhodes allies with Egypt for economic reasons
- 305 The Macedonian, Dimitrios Poliorketes, lays siege to Rhodes for a year without success. The Colossus is erected, by the sculptor Chares of Lindos.
- 304 Rhodes establishes first relations with Rome
- 227 Earthquake. The Colossus is demolished.
- 201 Philip of Macedonia occupies Rhodian possessions in Asia Minor. Rhodes calls on Rome for help.
- 190 Rhodes joins Rome against Hannibal. Victory for Rome.
- 164 Alliance pact with Rome establish a more dependent position for the island.
- 42 Cassius completely destroys the city of Rhodes and its fleet.

AD

- 50 The Apostle Paul lands in Lindos
- 395 The Roman empire splits in two. Rhodes now belongs to the Eastern empire.
- 1125 Venice conquers Rhodes
- 1306 Crusaders acquire the entire island from a Genoan admiral/pirate. Great works carried out by the knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Establishment of hospitals and fortifications of city walls.
- 1457-1522 Failed Turkish attempts to take over the city.
- 1522 6 month siege by Suleyman the Magnificent
- 1523 January 1st, the Knights of St. John capitulate. Rhodes remains under Turkish hegemony until 1912. No Greeks were allowed inside the city after nightfall. New city established by the Greeks beyond the walls.
- 1912 Rhodes occupied by Italy
- 1939 World War II begins
- 1943 The Germans invade Rhodes
- 1945 The British troops arrive and liberate the island
- 1948 Accession of the combined Dodecanese Islands to Greece.